

NH Charter School Advisory Group Meeting
February 11, 2014
NH DOE, Board Conference Room 10:00-11:40am
Corrected

Attendees:

Ellen Ohlenbusch, Lauren Morando Rhim, Meryl Levin, Thomas Frischknecht, Thomas Julius, Matt Southerton, : Jack Blodgett, Judith Fillion, Heather MacDonald
Michelle Gauthier, Karen Laba, Roberta Tenney

- Introductions
- Chair Ohlenbusch introduced a proposal regarding a Policy Template project. Members of the Advisory Group expressed the following questions:
 - What was the impetus of the project?
 - What is the purpose and scope of the project?
 - What level policies would the project focus on (e.g., state or charter LEA)?
 - What would be the source of model policies?
 - Is this the best/most valuable use of resources for the charter schools?
 - Would model policies be interpreted as required/mandates contrary to autonomy outlined in NH charter law?
 - What would be the role of the Dept in developing and vetting the policies?
 - What would be the natural home for the deliverables?
- Group paused to reflect on broader purpose of the Advisory Group
 - Right now NH Center for Innovative Schools and the NH Charter School Association speak for charters. The Advisory Committee provides charter schools an opportunity to have a direct voice related to charter school bills.
 - A prior iteration of the Advisory group was active for about a year and members used to testify and advocate for specific policies (e.g., direct payment to the charter schools). They set it up originally with people focused on compliance and funds. The group was robust for a couple of years and then people started to not come anymore.
 - The purpose of advisory group is to spread the advocacy work. Last year people requested more help so the group was revised.
 - Group is purely advisory and does not have any authority relative to the NH DOE
- Roberta Tenney introduced Karen Laba who the state has brought in to potentially lead the policy project. Laba shared her background and described the proposed project as she envisions it.
 - Develop a resource for existing and new charter schools looking for sample policies they may adapt.
 - Develop frameworks that could be customized by individual schools
- Members shared specific examples of policies that are emerging as problematic:
 - records release and issue associated with FERPA
 - working with the local district on a variety of issues
 - navigating special education with local districts

- clarity to legal identity of charter schools that are tax-exempt but have not formally sought 501C3 status with the IRS?
- Discussion about the project led to a discussion of individual schools more intentionally sharing their existing policies with colleagues.
- Roberta Tenney offered to ask the DOE general council to review “model” policies.
- Overall, Advisory Group members expressed mixed reactions regarding the scope and potential value of the project given other pressing needs that are causing more immediate challenges for the schools.
- As the meeting wrapped up, members discussed the need to share more about our individual needs/priorities. A shared document has been created and members were encouraged to complete their section so we could have a sense of the particular issues that are causing the greatest amount of concern for the most schools.
- Tenney shared that NH is due to have a monitoring site visit by the US Dept of Ed this spring. Wested will do the federal audit May 5-9th. The first couple of days the audit team will be at the Department and then they will visit schools. They are not sure what schools they will visit. DOE has received a 36 page manual. Individual schools are going to have to report how they have spent the federal dollars. They will want accountability on the finance side. Michelle can post the guide related to the site visits for schools are the sub-grantees. Feds will choose schools to visit. Schools will be identified by the end of March if they are going to be visited. Materials due to the U.S. Department of Ed at the end of April.
- Next meeting, Tuesday, March 11, 2014